



Washington State Public Health Laboratory
Risk and Safety Assessment
Community Meeting Report
November 6, 2008

Background

The purpose of this meeting was to share the results of a *Risk and Safety Assessment* that was recently completed for the Washington State Department of Health's (DOH) Public Health Laboratory (PHL), which is located at 1610 NE 150th Street in the City of Shoreline. The meeting was held on November 6, 2008 from 6:00 to 8:30 at the Public Health Laboratory.

Attendees' questions and comments on the *Draft Risk and Safety Assessment* will be used to shape and revise the Draft into a *Final Report*, which will be submitted to the Washington State Legislature in December 2008.

Approximately 20 members of the public attended the meeting.

Meeting Summary

The meeting began with an informal open house session, during which attendees were able to view information displayed on boards around the room. Attendees had approximately a half hour to review the materials and talk informally with Department of Health staff members and the consultant team.

Jude Van Buren, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Health opened the meeting and briefly described the functions of the Public Health Laboratory.

Dick Nicholson, Chair of the Ridgecrest Neighborhood Association and member of the risk assessment Stakeholder Group, described the work of the group and its role in shaping the *Risk and Safety Assessment*. Members of the Group who were in attendance introduced themselves.

Scott Dwyer, the project manager of the Kleinfelder team, presented the assessment results. Mr. Dwyer's PowerPoint presentation, as well as information about the Stakeholder Group and the risk and safety assessment process, is available online at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/PHL/RiskSafetyAssm/default.htm>.

Questions and Answers

After Scott's presentation, meeting attendees were able to ask questions of the Kleinfelder team and DOH staff members. Questions and Answers included:

What are the risks when chemicals are delivered to the Laboratory? Is there a big truck driving around full of chemicals and making deliveries at different labs?

No. Chemicals arrive in small quantities and are usually delivered via UPS or FedEx. The contents of these shipments are not known to outsiders. There is no "chemical truck delivery" system operating in the neighborhood.

Could radiation from the Laboratory be seeping into the surrounding area? Can you detect levels of radiation on 15th Avenue, for example?

No. In fact, we have to protect specimens in the Laboratory from radiation that might be emitted off of individuals. The level of radiation on individuals is usually higher than any specimens we are analyzing at the Laboratory. There is no radiation escaping from the Laboratory.

How safe is the Laboratory from earthquakes?

As we all know, Puget Sound is an earthquake-prone area. The Laboratory is actually located in between the Seattle and Whidbey Faults. The assessment team evaluated the Laboratory, determining that it is well-constructed and highly likely to be able to withstand an earthquake. The low height of the building, in combination with the construction techniques used for the Lab, provide significant safety and stability.

What would happen to Laboratory functions if we had a major disaster in our area?

The Public Health Laboratory maintains Memorandums of Agreement with other laboratories in King County, Spokane County, at WSU, and in Oregon, Idaho, and Alaska. These laboratories would step in to perform necessary functions should the PHL be incapacitated for any reason.

Did the risk assessment consider what will happen if the Laboratory increases the number of tests it performs?

The assessment did evaluate the proposed Laboratory addition project, which will expand the Laboratory's operating space and receiving facility. However, that proposed project only increases the *space* available to perform tests; *no new* tests are being added to the list of those conducted by the Laboratory on a regular basis.